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ABSTRACT

This booklet takes children on a tour of one of the oldest and most historic State Houses in the nation, that of Massachusetts. The booklet explains that the State House is the workplace of the Governor, the Legislature, and constitutional officers. It offers a historical overview of the Massachusetts State House. The first one was built in 1712, but when it became too small, the present one was built in 1795--20 years after the American Revolution. The booklet describes the different parts of the State House, such as the Capitol, the Golden Dome, Doric Hall, Nurses' Hall, and the Hall of Flags. It also discusses the making of state laws and the legislative branches of the state government. (BT)

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What's under the Golden Dome?

A Children's Guide to the Massachusetts State House

Published by
William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Tours and Government Education Division

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Welcome to your State House!

This book takes you on a tour of one of the oldest and most historic State Houses in our nation.

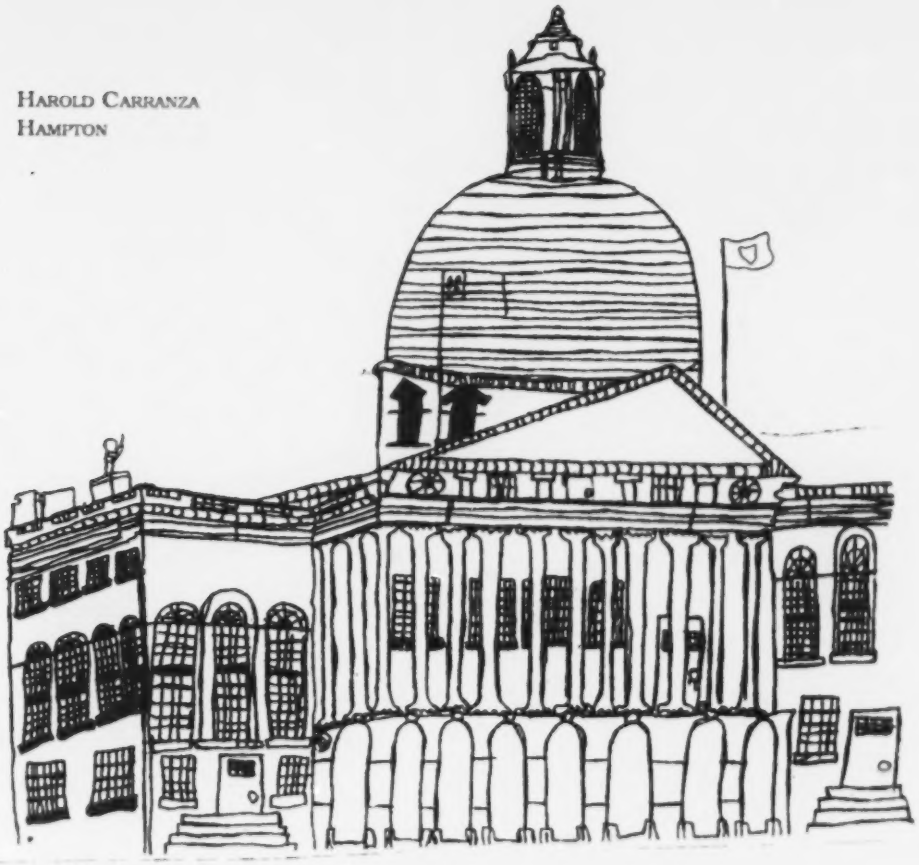
The State House is the workplace of the Governor, Legislature, and constitutional officers. There are always things to see and do there.

William Francis Galvin

William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

P.S. Be sure to look carefully at the many portraits of our former governors in the halls... don't their eyes seem to follow you as you pass?

Note: Most of the drawings and all of the poetry in this little book were drawn and written by school children who visited the State House.



HAROLD CARRANZA
HAMPTON

The Capitol

A very talented man named Charles Bulfinch designed the State House and it wasn't a cinch.

CAROLYN MULCAHY
WINTHROP

The Massachusetts State House is the capitol building of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the very heart of state government.

It is the second state house Massachusetts has had. You can still see the Old State House at the corner of State Street and Washington Street. It was built in 1712. Before the Revolution, it was the home of the Royal government of the colony of Massachusetts; after the Revolution it became the home of the government of the state of Massachusetts.

By 1795, twenty years after the Revolution, the citizens of Massachusetts decided that the old State House was too small.

To design a new, larger state house they chose Charles Bulfinch. He was a famous Boston architect who designed some of the most beautiful homes and churches in Boston, most of which are still in use today.

DIANE RICHARD HAMPDEN

MICHAEL STONE
HAMPDEN

The Bulfinch State House was a dignified red brick building with white columns, topped by an impressive dome. It was built at the top of Beacon Hill looking out over all of the city, on land that had been John Hancock's cow pasture.

It is still the central part of the State House today, but many rooms have been added.

The Golden Dome

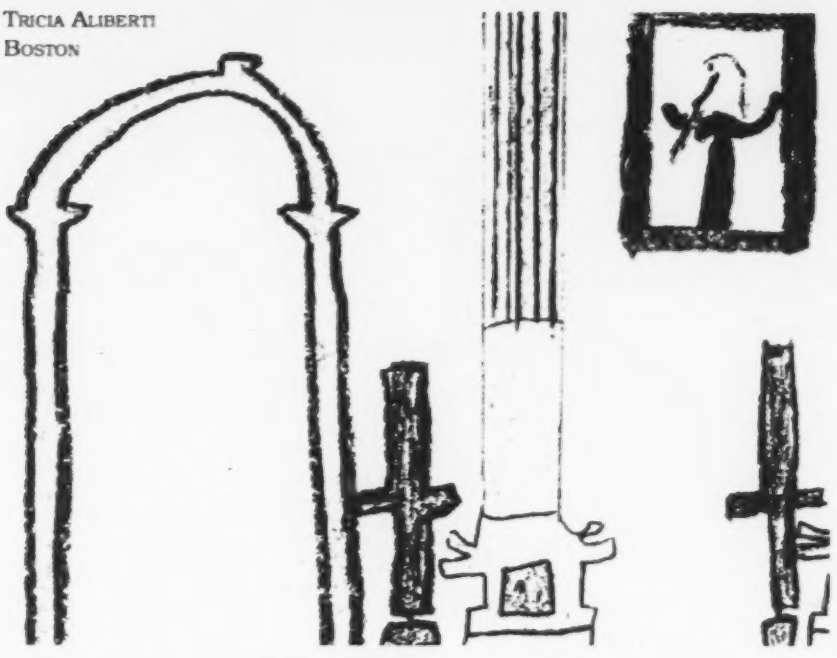
Charles Bulfinch designed the dome which crowns the State House, but when it was built, the dome was not gold – it was shingled! In just a few years, the dome began to leak in rain and snow, so the company of Paul Revere was hired to cover the dome with copper to make it water-tight. Later, in 1872, the dome was gilded with real gold leaf, and, as you know, still glows with gold today.

Dome golden,
bright sparkles
reflects
shines
atop the State House

JOHN MCPHEE
GERALD SOMERS
GARY WILLS
BOSTON

At the very top of the dome is a sculpture carved of wood. Many people think it is a pineapple, but it is not. It is a pine cone, put there to remind everyone of the importance of the pine trees which provided wood to build our houses, churches and commercial buildings. The wood for the State House came from the northern part of Massachusetts, which, in 1820, became the state of Maine.

Tricia Aliberti
Boston



Doric Hall

Doric Hall is named for the ten tall columns in the room (Doric is the name of the design). In this very room, Governor John Andrew passed out guns and ammunition and flags to the men who had volunteered to fight in the Civil War. The first military unit to arrive in Washington to help President Abraham Lincoln were part of the Sixth Massachusetts Division.

Inside the room you will see a painting of Abraham Lincoln, a statue of George Washington, historic cannons, and copies of gravestones.

It is interesting to know that the main doors of Doric Hall are only opened on two special occasions – when the President of the United States comes to visit, and when a Governor leaves the State House for the last time.

I went on a State House tour and opened a side door to see a marble floor.

James Passa
Boston

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Nurses' Hall

When you walk out of Doric Hall and into Nurse's Hall you have left the part of the State House designed by Bulfinch and entered a "new" addition which is quite old now. Build in 1895 and designed by Charles Brigham, it has a very different feeling with its ornate mosaic floors, marble columns, and large murals.

One of the most inspiring sculptures in the State House is in this room. It is a statue of a nurse and a wounded soldier which was carved to honor the women who served as nurses during the Civil War.

In this room, too, are paintings of Paul Revere's ride and the Boston Tea Party.

The fighters bold
pledged flags of old
marching along
when days were cold.
Down the lane
in pouring rain
some held flags
with aching pain.
Flags have stars of blue
red and white stripes too
carried for America.
This we all knew.

LISA OHMAN
NORTH WEYMOUTH

Hall of Flags

The Hall of Flags is a very special room. It was built just to preserve and display the flags brought back from war by soldiers from Massachusetts. There are flags from the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Berlin Emergency, and the Vietnam War.

In the center of the stained glass window in the ceiling is the Massachusetts state seal, surrounded by the seals of the twelve other original colonies.

DEAN DARR
LEOMINSTER

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Making State Laws

Anny Mercure
Hampden

The chambers of the House and Senate are where the men and women who represent you meet to make the laws for all the citizens of Massachusetts.

There are forty senators. They are elected every two years. Their leader is the Senate president.

The House of Representatives is much larger – but not as large as it used to be. Today, there are 160 representatives – in 1812, there were 749! Their leader is called the Speaker of the House.

Together, the House and Senate are called the General Court.

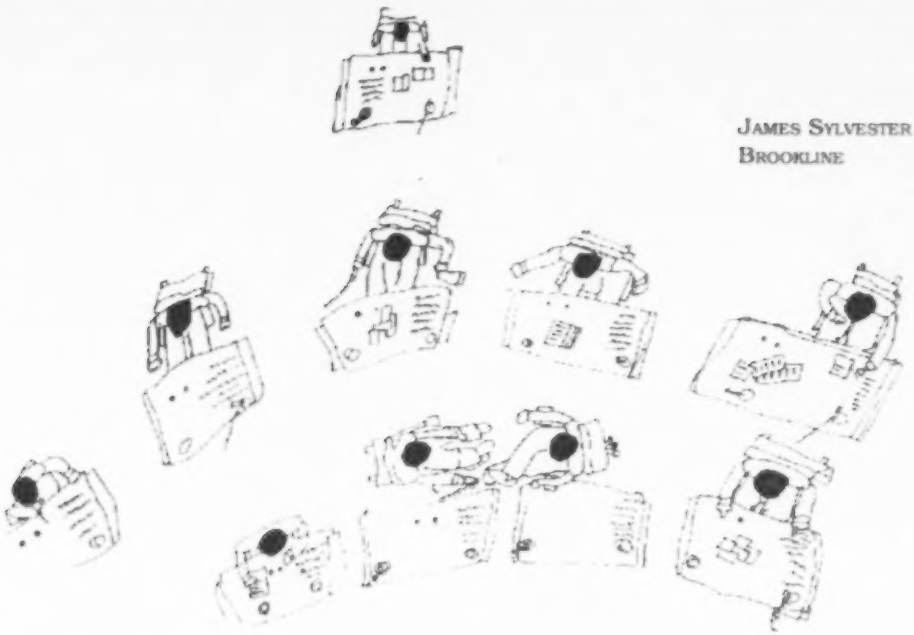
Of course, making a law is harder than this. But Massachusetts is a special state. Every person here has what is called the Right to Free Petition. This means that anyone who thinks the state needs a new law can take his or her idea to a state senator or representative and ask them to present it to the legislature. The idea is called a petition or bill. After many discussions and meetings and votes, the bill can become a law.

I went to the State House
up on a hill
I made up a bill
and it came our a law.

Kenny McMasters
Dorchester

In the State House, the Senators and Representatives have their offices, hold meetings, and think about people's comments, advice, and questions. Then they vote on bills. When the governor signs them, they become the laws we live by. Everyone needs special rules to live by or else we would have many problems now. We should be glad that here we make and choose our own laws.

Suzanne Harkness
Leominster



JAMES SYLVESTER
BROOKLINE

House of Representatives

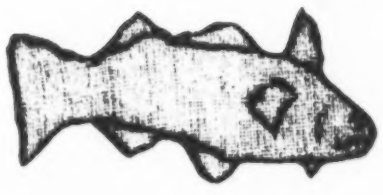
Buttons,
red or green.
House of Representatives
to vote yea or nay.

KEVIN PITTS
BOSTON

In this room, shaped like a theatre, the men and women who represent the citizens of Massachusetts meet and talk and vote, and make important decisions about state government.

At the front of the room are two large boards, part of an electronic roll call system, which list the names of the representatives. When a vote is taken, lights on the boards show how each representative voted.

Hanging over the visitor's gallery is the famous "Sacred Cod". It is a symbol of Massachusetts' earliest business – fishing.



On one fine day the cod came in
with gleaming tooth and shining fin.

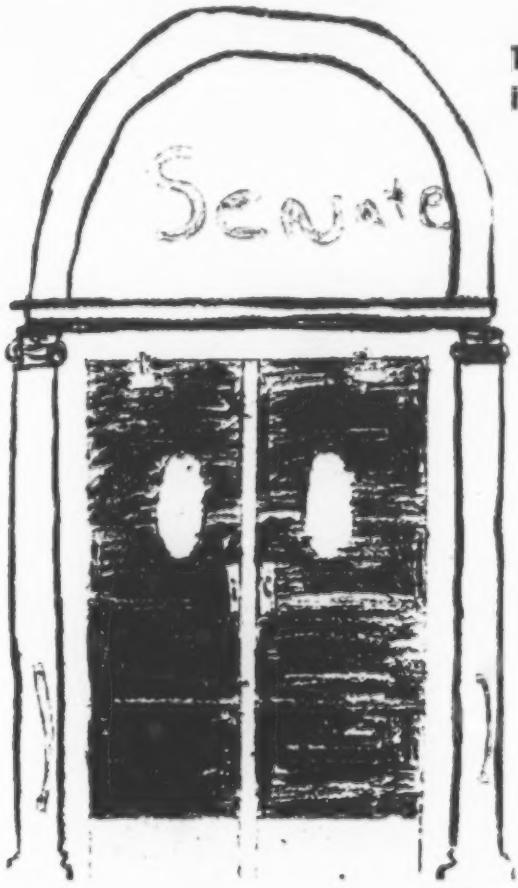
DENNIS MARISSEAY
WELLESLEY

The Senate Chamber

In the blue and white Senate Chamber, the senators work at a circle of desks facing the rostrum, where the Senate President sits under a golden eagle.

This room is famous for its domed ceiling (which is right below the golden State House dome) and the symbols in the ceiling.

Across the hall is the Senate Reception Room where you will see the portraits of some former Senate presidents.



The Senate Chamber is big and blue it has a lot of nice things too.

Leanne DiCarlo
Revere

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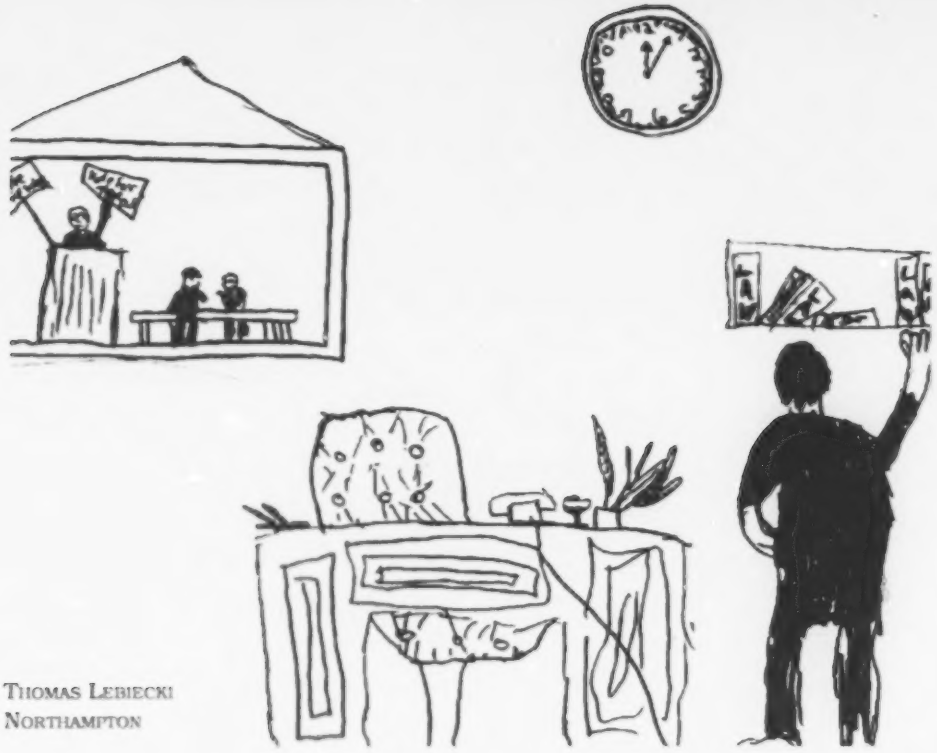

THOMAS LEBIECKI
NORTHAMPTON

The Governor's Office

The Governor's Office and the Governor's Council Room across the hall are on the third floor of the State House. On the walls of the Governor's room are sculptures which symbolize the arts, freedom, executive power and Massachusetts.

In the hall between two offices is a copy of the painting of George Washington, which is on the dollar bill.

The Governor's Council Chamber is a very unusual room because it is a perfect cube – its height, width, and depth are all the same.

The People at the State House

In the wide wide hills of the State House
you may see the people who work here –
the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary
of state, attorney general, treasurer, and
auditor – who are all constitutional officers,
elected by all the voters in the state.

You will also see some of the many others
who help to make state government work –
senators and representatives and their
legislative aides, court officers, carpenters
and painters, lawyers, secretaries, tour
guides, librarians, and capitol police.

And, of course, you'll see lots of other
people who are visiting the State House
just like you.

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